

§ 10. Lord Howe Island.

1. **Area, Location, etc.**—Between Norfolk Island and the Australian coast is Lord Howe Island in latitude $31^{\circ} 30'$ south; longitude $159^{\circ} 5'$ east. It was discovered in 1788. The total area is 3220 acres, the island being seven miles in length and from one-half to one and three-quarter miles in width. It is distant 436 miles from Sydney. The flora is varied and the vegetation luxuriant, with shady forests, principally of palms and banyans. The highest point is Mount Gower, 2840 feet. The climate is mild and the rainfall abundant.

2. **Settlement.**—The first settlement was by a small Maori party in 1853; afterwards a colony was settled from Sydney. Constitutionally, it is a dependency of New South Wales, and is supervised by a visiting magistrate.

3. **Population.** The population at the Census of 3rd April, 1911, was 56 males, 49 females, total 105.

4. **Production, Trade, etc.**—The principal product is the seed of the native or *Kentia* palms. A monthly steamship service is maintained with Sydney. The lands belong to the Crown. The occupants pay no rent, and are tenants on sufferance.

§ 11. Interstate Conferences.

1. **Interstate Conferences, 1914.**—In Year Book No. 7, pages 1055 to 1062, will be found an account of the following conferences :—

- (1) Premiers' Conference, held in Melbourne, March, 1914.
- (2) Murray River Waters Conference, held in Melbourne, March, 1914.
- (3) Treasurers' Conference, held in Melbourne, May, 1914.

In the present edition the Murray Water conference is referred to fully in the section dealing with Water Conservation (page 507).

2. **Premiers' Conference, 1915.**—On the 5th of May, 1915, and following days, a conference of Premiers was held in Sydney. The Prime Minister of the Commonwealth attended by invitation, in order to confer with the Premiers on matters of joint interest to Commonwealth and States. The following are the more important resolutions adopted :—

(i.) *Strategic Railways.* Resolved: That this Conference, recognising the importance of strategic railways, and being anxious to assist the Commonwealth in this connection, but recognising also the importance of avoiding unprofitable and unnecessary multiplications of new lines, is of opinion that the best interests of all will be conserved by an immediate conference between the military advisers of the Commonwealth and the Railway Commissioners of the States directly affected on the question of route; such conference to report to the Commonwealth Government and the Governments of the six States.

(ii.) *Uniform Railway Gauge.* Resolved: That, in the opinion of this Conference, a commission of two leading railway experts, preferably from outside the Commonwealth, should be forthwith appointed by the Government of the mainland States to consider, report, and advise upon the question of unifying the gauge of Australian railways, particularly as to—

- (a) The need for a uniform gauge ;
- (b) The most suitable gauge in the circumstances of existing and probable future development in Australia ;
- (c) The best method of carrying out the unification of gauge deemed advisable ;
- (d) What benefits will result (1) to the Commonwealth ; and (2) to each of the States ;
- (e) The probable cost of such unification.

The expenses of this commission to be borne by the States upon a population basis.

(iii.) *Uniform Federal and State Rolls.* Resolved : That steps be taken to secure electoral roll uniformity between Commonwealth and State.

(iv.) *Old-age and Invalid Pensions.* Resolved : That a more liberal interpretation of the ruling relating to the admission of pensioners to benevolent asylums and payment for their maintenance in institutions be accepted by the Pensions Department, and that when application for admission is made a decision be arrived at without the application having to stand over for three months for consideration, also that full pension rates should be paid to institutions on account of pensioners received within them, either temporarily or permanently.

(v.) *Uniform Food and Drug Standards.* Resolved : That in the opinion of this Conference it is desirable to bring into uniformity as far as practicable the clauses of the various States' Pure Food Acts dealing with the question of guarantee of goods, so as to secure ample protection to the public, and to prevent the use for advertising purposes of any words indicating the existence of a guarantee, and that the Attorney-General of Queensland be requested to prepare a Bill giving effect to the above resolution, for circulation among the States.

(vi.) *Lands Acquisition Bill before Federal Parliament.* Resolved : That it be referred to the States Attorneys-General to draft a clause to the effect that the Commonwealth will obtain the consent of the State Governments prior to any acquisition being made.

(vii.) *Uniform Light and Harbour Dues.* Resolved : That steps be taken to adjust the harbour dues in the various States so that, as far as possible, shipping shall not be diverted from one State to another in consequence of differential charges.

(viii.) *National Insurance against Unemployment.* Resolved : That in the opinion of this Conference it is desirable to introduce a scheme of national insurance on the lines of the British National Insurance Act, and legislation on this subject should be uniform amongst the States ; the Attorney-General of Queensland to prepare a Bill for submission to the Attorney-General of each State with a view to its early enactment by each of the States.

(ix.) *Metallurgical Industries.* Resolved : That this Conference, recognising the great importance to Australia of the treatment of refractory ores and the manufacture of goods and materials from the products thereof, is of opinion that a joint inquiry should be conducted by the States, if possible with the co-operation of the Federal Government, as to any method by which such industries may be established.

§ 12. Interstate Commission.

In accordance with the provisions of the Commonwealth Constitution Act (sections 101 to 104, see page 33) an Act providing for the appointment of the commission was assented to on the 24th December, 1912. The personnel of the commission was, however, not decided until the 11th August, 1913, when Messrs. A. B. Piddington (as Chief Commissioner), G. Swinburne, and N. Lockyer, were appointed. On the 8th